

**All She Had to Live On
Extravagant Generosity
Proper 27, Year B**

Overview

Focus Text: Mark 12:41-44

Jesus sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.

Scripture Commentary by Rev. Cathy Tamsberg, Minister of Outreach and Adult Education, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh

Jesus’ attack on the scribes (“teachers of the law” in the NIV) is not just about their ambition or actions taken for show, but rather their fundamental misunderstanding of the faith. The condemnation of men who eat up the property of widows is an old one (see Isaiah 10:1-2).

Pastoral Reflection by Rev. Cathy Tamsberg

If we lived generously, we would proclaim to the world through our actions that we trust God enough to share what God has given to us with others. We would not tolerate the kind of poverty that natural disasters like hurricanes and earthquakes force onto our television screens. We would not abide the sale of politicians and political decisions to the highest corporate bidder. We would refuse to participate in the pollution of the planet in all the ways possible. We would make peace—within our families, with our neighbors and co-workers, among races and classes and nations—our highest goal.

Personal Vignette

Generosity can be practiced at many levels, not just by individuals like the widow in Jesus’ story. Consider the following:
Congregations and denominations can show generosity by paying lower-wage employees more than they must and by the amount of

money and time given to help vulnerable people, either locally or beyond the local community. Businesses, too, can show generosity by how they treat their lowest-level employees, by what priorities they have besides profit, and by how much they give away in their own communities or beyond.

Key Fact

In 1970, the United States along with the world's other richest countries agreed to give 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) to international development aid, annually. The US is often the largest donor in dollar terms, but often ranks amongst the lowest in terms of meeting the stated 0.7% target. In 2010 the United States gave just above 0.2% of its GNI. The countries with the highest rates of giving are: Norway, Luxembourg, Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands.